

Depending when your immigrant ancestors sought citizenship, naturalization records can give you the precise date and port of arrival, the name of the ship, the port of departure, and the birth date and place. Being familiar with the United States' immigration laws will help you determine what documents may exist for your ancestor.

Want to learn more about US naturalization laws? Read our guide in the May 2008 *Family Tree Magazine*. You also can consult *American Naturalization Processes and Procedures, 1790-1985* by John J. Newman (Heritage Quest, out of print) and *They Became Americans: Finding Naturalization Records and Ethnic Origins* by Loretto Dennis Szucs (Ancestry, \$19.95).

- 1790 ■ US government establishes uniform naturalization rules for white males 21 and older; children of naturalized citizens get automatic citizenship
- 1795 ■ Free white females age 21 and older can become citizens
- 1804 ■ Alien widows and children receive citizenship if the husband or father died prior to filing final papers
- 1824 ■ Alien minors, upon turning 21, can be naturalized if they've lived in the US for five years
- 1855 ■ Alien women become citizens upon marrying US citizens
- 1862 ■ Aliens who've received honorable discharges from the US Army can skip filing declarations of intention
- 1868 ■ Former slaves become citizens under the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment
- 1870 ■ People of African descent may become citizens
- 1882 ■ Government excludes Asians from citizenship
- 1887 ■ Dawes Act entitles American Indians to become US citizens if they've accepted a land allotment
- 1891 ■ US establishes Bureau of Immigration
- 1894 ■ Declaration of intention requirement is waived for aliens who've received honorable discharges after serving five years in the Navy or Marine Corps
- 1906 ■ Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization Service is established
- 1917 ■ Puerto Ricans become US citizens
- 1922 ■ Married women's citizenship becomes independent of her husband's
- 1924 ■ American Indians are granted full citizenship
- 1929 ■ Photographs are required on petition for naturalization
- 1940 ■ Alien Registration Act passes
- 1943 ■ Asian immigrants are allowed to become citizens
- 1952 ■ Age requirement for naturalization drops to 18; declaration of intention becomes optional
- 1990 ■ Courts no longer naturalize citizens
- 2003 ■ Immigration and Naturalization Service becomes US Citizenship and Immigration Services

## Toolkit

- **Finding US Naturalization Records: A Genealogy Guide**  
<[home.att.net/~wee-monster/naturalizationrecords.html](http://home.att.net/~wee-monster/naturalizationrecords.html)>
- **Footnote**  
<[footnote.com](http://footnote.com)>
- **Immigration Legal History**  
<[www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov)>: Click on Education and Resources on the horizontal tab, then Immigration Legal History on the vertical list.
- **Immigration and Ships Passenger Lists Research Guide: Naturalization Records**  
<[home.att.net/~arnielang/ship08.html](http://home.att.net/~arnielang/ship08.html)>
- **List of Famous Naturalized Citizens of the United States**  
<[www.answers.com/topic/list-of-famous-naturalized-citizens-of-the-united-states](http://www.answers.com/topic/list-of-famous-naturalized-citizens-of-the-united-states)>
- **NARA: Naturalization Records**  
<[archives.gov/genealogy/naturalization](http://archives.gov/genealogy/naturalization)>
- **Naturalization Records in the US Citizenship and Immigration Services**  
<[www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov)>: Click on Education and Resources, then Genealogy.
- **Prologue Magazine: Women and Naturalization, ca. 1802-1940**  
<[archives.gov/publications/prologue/1998/summer/women-and-naturalization-1.html](http://archives.gov/publications/prologue/1998/summer/women-and-naturalization-1.html)>
- **Records for the Study of Ethnic History in the National Archives Pacific Region**  
<[archives.gov/pacific/san-francisco/finding-aids/ethnic-reference-paper.html](http://archives.gov/pacific/san-francisco/finding-aids/ethnic-reference-paper.html)>